

ROANOKE CITY COUNCIL-REGULAR SESSION

March 7, 2022

9:00 a.m.

The Council of the City of Roanoke met in joint session with the Roanoke City School Board on Monday, March 7, 2022 at 9:00 a.m., in the Council Chamber, Room 450, fourth floor, Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building, 215 Church Avenue, S. W., City of Roanoke, with Mayor Sherman P. Lea, Sr., presiding, pursuant to Chapter 2, Administration, Article II, City Council, Section 2-15, Rules of Procedure, Rule 1, Regular Meetings, Code of the City of Roanoke (1979), as amended, and pursuant to Resolution No. 42245-010322 adopted by the Council on Monday, January 3, 2022.

PRESENT: Council Members Patricia White-Boyd, William D. Bestpitch, Joseph L. Cobb, Robert L. Jeffrey, Jr., Stephanie Moon Reynolds, Vivian Sanchez-Jones, and Mayor Lea-7.

ABSENT: None-0.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Robert S. Cowell, Jr., City Manager; Timothy R. Spencer, City Attorney; and Cecelia F. McCoy, City Clerk.

The Mayor declared the existence of a quorum.

SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES PRESENT: Diane M. Casola, Mark K. Cathey, Michael L. Cherry, II, Joyce W. Watkins, and Vice-Chair Elizabeth C. S. Jamison-5.

SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES ABSENT: Trustee Natasha N. Saunders and Chairman Lutheria H. Smith-2.

Representing the City of Roanoke: Clarence G. Grier, Deputy City Manager for Operations; and W. Brent Robertson, Assistant City Manager for Community Development.

Representing Roanoke City Public Schools: Verletta White, Superintendent; Christopher Perkins, Chief Operations Officer; and Cindy H. Poulton, Clerk of the Roanoke City School Board.

SCHOOLS: Mayor Lea welcomed everyone to the joint meeting of City Council and the Roanoke City School Board and called upon the School Board Vice-Chairman for remarks; whereupon Vice-Chairman Jamison welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Council for the opportunity to discuss Division initiatives and accomplishments, adding that the School Board was committed to maintaining open and transparent communication to ensure the best for students, families, parents, and staff.

Strategic Initiatives

School Superintendent, expressed excitement about the recent adoption of a six-year Strategic Plan, The Roadmap to Student Success, developed by a group of stakeholders who served on the Strategic Plan Steering Committee as well as feedback from the community; she noted that it also included the 2023 - 2027 Capital Improvement Plan, a ten-year look ahead at projects identified through a process around an equity lens and scoring matrix; and adoption of the FY2023 Categorical Budget.

Ms. White thanked the Council for their fiscal commitment to the Division and School Board members for their support and leadership. She stated with pride to be good fiscal stewards focused on hiring more staff, increasing starting salaries, staying current and updated on technology resources, increasing efforts related to employee recruitment and retention, increasing pay for substitutes, and aligning fiscal resources with the Strategic Plan.”

Mayor Lea inquired about how class sizes compared with neighboring divisions; whereupon the Superintendent advised that many class sizes were above 30:1 and the goal was 25:1 especially in core content areas, and she would have to research how the school Division class sizes compared to other districts.

Student Representation on School Board

Vice-Chairman Jamison advised that the School Board was excited about adding student representatives to attend the regularly scheduled school board meetings which policy was adopted in February 2022, and stated that the School Board intends to select one student representative from each high school to begin serving in August 2022, adding Trustees Cherry and Saunders will serve as mentors to the student representatives and plan to visit both high schools to promote the application process.

Trustee Cherry interjected that he and Trustee Saunders had already met with rising seniors at both high schools to discuss the requirements, such as successful candidates must have a 2.0 grade point average to participate.

RCPS Plans With Regard to COVID-19 (Teacher Sick Leave, Bus Drivers, and Student Vaccinations)

Superintendent White advised that the School Division was hit hard by the pandemic and efforts were made to offer support through designated sick days, teacher bonuses and other incentives for extra duties, and bonuses for bus drivers. She stated that the Division provided transportation for students and families to and from vaccination sites; and lastly called attention to several mitigation strategies.

In response to a comment by Vice-Mayor White-Boyd that a citizen expressed inequities for vaccinations for young children, Ms. White remarked that the Division encouraged vaccinations for all eligible students and was proud of the partnership with the Virginia Department of Health to vaccinate students and staff. She mentioned that the School Division recently implemented a “Test to Stay Program,” which allows students who may have been exposed to COVID to stay in school while wearing a face covering and testing weekly.

Consideration of School Uniforms

Vice-Mayor White-Boyd advised that she received inquiries from parents with regard to implementation of school uniforms and inquired as to the process; whereupon, Vice-Chairman Jamison stated that policies adopted in 2005, provided the regulations on uniforms in schools, which was prompted on a school-by-school basis; and if parents were interested they should contact the school principal to begin the process and added that it required buy in by 70 percent of eligible families to implement school uniforms.

Annual Outsourcing Report

In response to Council Member Moon Reynolds request for an overview of the Outsourcing Report, Ms. White advised that the School Division appreciates its vendor partners and noted that student transportation, food services, school nurses, substitutes, and crossing guards that were outsourced, noting all contribute significantly to the success of the School Division. In closing, she reported that a copy of the annual outsourcing report had been provided to members of Council and was also available on the RCPS website.

Council Member Cobb inquired about the requirements to become a substitute teacher; whereupon Chief Operations Officer Perkins offered to forward the information to City Council.

In response to Council Member Cobb's inquiry about Durham School Services providing transportation for student internships, Mr. Perkins advised that 15 passenger vans and buses had been purchased for such instances.

Financial Status of the School Board with the Acquisition of New Building and School Renovations/Potential Need for Additional Funding

In response to Council Member Jeffrey regarding the School Division needing additional funding, above the 40 percent, in connection with acquisition of the new building and school renovations, Superintendent White advised that the RCPS was grateful to City Council for the 40 percent funding as it keeps the Division operational, but in moving forward there may be additional opportunities to collaborate with the Roanoke City to better serve the families and community.

The Chief Financial Officer also replied since RCPS takes its finances very seriously, it had created a capital projects fund to leverage local funding which enables RCPS to look at new projects, such as the purchase of the former *Roanoke Times* building, while staying within the \$5 million allocation for capital spending.

Council Member Bestpitch asked if the Schools' Fund Balance would contribute to the capital projects fund; whereupon, Ms. Jackson stated that intentional budgeting for capital needs as well as debt service savings would also contribute to the capital projects fund.

Plan to Supplement Shortage or Replacement of School Resource Officers in Schools/Possibility of Armed Schools Security Officers in Schools

In connection with an inquiry from Council Member Vivian Sanchez-Jones as to how the Division planned to supplement the shortage of school resource officers; and if the Division had considered the possibility of arming school security officers in the high schools, Ms. White indicated that RCPS does not intend to recommend arming school security officers because they have not had the proper training like police officers; and students and staff safety was paramount and it could be explored for those individuals not far removed from the training.

Council Member Sanchez-Jones emphasized her referenced the seven retired police officers currently serving as school resource officers who have a combined experience of approximately 120 years, not a new officer on the job.

In answering Mayor Lea's question if school resource officers were in every school, the Superintendent stated there was one school resource officer at each high school and five Sheriff's deputies covering 17 elementary schools and five middle schools.

Overview of Youth and Gang Violence Community Assessment and Current Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Team Efforts

Council Member Cobb provided a brief overview of the Youth and Gang Violence Community Assessment, noting a more detailed report would be provided at the March 22, 2022 School Board Workshop, highlighting key findings of the community assessment conducted by Elite Business Strategies, Inc. He pointed out that the assessment was made possible by the General Assembly, through an act of legislation initiated by Delegate Price because seven communities were identified as having growth in terms of recognized gun violence and gang violence among youth, Roanoke being one of the communities.

He advised that the survey received responses from 114 community leaders, 63 youth serving agencies, 528 residents, and 259 students or youth; and the goal was to conduct the survey every other year, along with working closely with RCPS to ensure robust student participation.

He introduced Roanoke's Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Coordinator Chris Roberts, pointing out that the City received a grant to fund the position as well as two outreach positions. He also reviewed efforts in the areas of community engagement, interventions, prevention services, and enrichment activities.

As a follow up to Council Member Cobb's overview, Ms. White mentioned how the efforts of the Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Unit would align with RCPS to ensure strong collaboration, stating that RCPS staff was excited and wanted to ensure students' physical and social-emotional safety through a team approach that compliments the City's efforts that addresses prevention, restoration, and logical consequences, which efforts include listening to students interests as well as planning learning opportunities for parents and guardians.

Explanation of Use of Metals Detectors, etc. at Certain Sporting Events

Council Member Jeffrey asked if there had been discussion regarding the use of metal detectors given the limited number of school resource officers, noting the recent incident at William Fleming High School, which involved a weapon.

Superintendent White reported conversations were ongoing as part of student safety discussions, emphasizing the School Division was not opposed to the use of metal detectors. She mentioned the complexity of using them would create bottlenecks, adding every school entrance must be covered, adding the metal detectors must be manned and such responsibility should not fall upon the teachers and other staff members. She pointed out that front-end discussion on prevention and restoration were most important and maintaining open lines of communication were key.

Council Member Jeffrey also inquired if there was an educational alternative for expelled students, realizing there was a direct correlation between lack of education and crime; whereupon Ms. White advised that the alternative was the Noel C. Taylor Education Center.

In concluding discussion amongst School Board Trustees and Council Members, Vice-Chairman Jamison expressed appreciation to City Council for the opportunity to have such productive discussions; and Mayor Lea thanked the School Board for their participation and recognized retiring School Board Clerk Cindy Poulton.

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Jamison adjourned the Roanoke City School Board meeting at 10:36 a.m.

There being no further business, Mayor Lea declared the Council meeting in recess at 10:36 a.m.

At 10:49 a.m., the Council Meeting reconvened in the Council Chamber, Room 450, fourth floor, Noel C. Taylor Building, 215 Church Avenue, S. W., to consider the following items for action, with Mayor Lea presiding and all Members of the Council in attendance.

ITEMS FOR ACTION:

VACANCIES ON CERTAIN AUTHORITIES, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES APPOINTED BY COUNCIL: A communication from Mayor Sherman P. Lea, Sr., requesting that Council convene in a Closed Meeting to discuss vacancies on certain authorities, boards, commissions and committees appointed by Council, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1), Code of Virginia (1950), as amended, was before the body.

(See communication on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member Moon Reynolds moved that Council concur in the request of the Mayor as abovementioned. The motion seconded by Council Member Cobb and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Vice-Mayor White-Boyd, Council Members Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

DISPOSITION OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTY: A communication from the City Manager requesting that Council convene in a meeting to discuss the disposition of City-owned property containing 67 acres located Countryside, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body, pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A)(3), Code of Virginia (1950), as amended.

(See communication on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member Bestpitch moved that Council concur in the request of the City Manager as abovementioned. The motion seconded by Council Member Moon Reynolds and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Vice-Mayor White-Boyd, Council Members Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

ITEMS LISTED ON THE 2:00 P.M. COUNCIL DOCKET REQUIRING DISCUSSION/CLARIFICATION AND ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO THE 2:00 P.M. AGENDA: NONE.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION BY THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL: NONE.

BRIEFINGS:

Budget/Financial Planning FY 23

Amelia C. Merchant, Director of Finance and Paul W. Workman, Budget Manager, briefed the Council on the development of the FY 2022 - 2023 budget process.

Ms. Merchant highlighted the following information:

- FY 2022 Overview
- FY 2023 Development and Next Steps
- Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Next Steps
- FY 2023 Balancing Status

(See presentation on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

The Director of Finance advised that the 2022 Fiscal Year budget began with approximately 3.2 percent over the FY 2021 Adopted Budget, of that amount local taxes were 68.3 percent or about \$210 million. She also pointed out that through January, FY 2022 local taxes were 6.2 percent ahead of target, mainly due to performance of sales, prepared food & beverage, and transient occupancy taxes; and FY 2022 revenues increased approximately \$11.7 million, or 10 percent compared to the same period of FY 2021; and other revenues increased approximately \$3.6 million or 9.3 percent compared to the same period of FY 2021 due to the timing of collection of state revenues.

She continued that expenditures through January 2022 increased approximately \$8.6 million or 5.4 percent compared to the same period of FY 2021 due to anticipated compensation increases, transfers to capital projects, debt service, GRTC, RCPS, Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge and CSA expenses such as Alternative Private Day.

Ms. Merchant reported that overall, the General Fund was in a favorable position at 6.9 percent below target; public safety overtime continues to be an area to monitor at 165 percent over target driven by operations within fire and jail mainly vacancies and retirements; and the Children's Services Act expenditures as a higher area driving that target overage.

She explained that in terms of the key local tax performance projections, taxes were exceeding the adopted budget by 4.7 percent or approximately \$9 million. She noted that personal property, sales, prepared food and beverage and transient occupancy taxes lead the way in the projection beyond the budget. She quantified the potential impact on the General Fund, if the \$9.9 million projection held true, would be adjusted down to account for the \$45,000.00 due to downtown district taxes; and noted that approximately \$431,000.00 would be due to Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge leaving a remaining net balance of \$9.4 million to be shared with the School Division leaving approximately \$5.7 million for the City.

In terms of potential fee adjustments, the Director of Finance explained that the only proposed adjustment was the elimination of library fines and fees, because of work that the Library had been doing within the Consortium that involves Roanoke City, Roanoke County and the City of Salem. She noted that this effort was in response to COVID-19 impacts that affected citizens who were unable to pay fines and to ensure that the youngest population does not have barriers to education and are able to use the resources within the library system, adding should someone be unable to return a book or resource they would still be held accountable to pay the cost of that resource.

The Budget Manager continued the presentation by providing an overview of the status of expenditures included in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget and updates to the Capital Improvement Plan. He advised that the City of Roanoke recently kicked off a compensation study not expected to conclude until after budget adoption, but in the meantime \$7.7 million reserved towards compensation as a planning figure, he noted that a 1 percent pay increase was approximately \$1 million for all city employees.

Mr. Workman reviewed the FY 2023 expenditure enhancements for each priority and pointed out that health and dental costs increased \$505,500.00 necessary to hold the employee levels to their contributions; therefore, the City will increase its contribution to health and dental costs by five percent for \$395.00 annually per employee.

Regarding the balancing status, Mr. Workman advised that the current budget variance was \$4,774,670.00 and staff would continue over the coming months to reduce the difference and bring forth a balanced budget on April 18. He noted that the next phase of budget development would be a challenge as staff dives deeper into the supplements as well as look for savings in the base budget and economic improvement.

- Financial Advisors Davenport & Company

David Rose, Senior Vice-President and Head of Public Finance, briefed the Council advising that the City was in a strong financial position and talked about recommending additional capital and working towards multi-year capital program. He mentioned that he was asked to look at Fiscal Years 2022 - 2027 and speak to the ability for the city to meet all debt policies and what was funded does not go beyond the useful life of projects.

He explained that the actual funding was nearly \$113 million over the six-year period and reviewed two scenarios the traditional borrowing approach and the strategic funding approach.

Mr. Workman continued by reviewing the Capital Improvement Plan and debt policies, highlighting the main projects currently funded by cash or grant sources, which included annual bridge maintenance, annual street paving, fleet capital replacements, technology capital improvements, capital building maintenance and Parks and Recreation Master Plan - Eureka Recreation Center improvements, an \$8 million project using ARPA funds.

He further reviewed the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), noting that street paving was typically cash funded, but this year a portion of it was included to be bond funded to ensure that the City accomplished the goal of repaving all city streets in a 20-year cycle.

Ms. Merchant concluded the briefing, by reviewing debt service advising that Mr. Rose presented two options for further consideration for debt issuance in 2023, traditional approach and the 20-year bond issuance. She noted that the practice was to look at the required debt service over the next five years to best ensure that the City can build up the needed debt service funding across that time period, rather than have to lump it all in a traditional year; and if the traditional approach for debt service is applied, one million dollars each year for the next three fiscal years would have to be added to be prepared for Fiscal Year 2025.

She indicated If the bond approach was applied, it would not require the addition of any debt service in Fiscal Year 2023 to be prepared for the servicing of the debt. She pointed out that as the debt was issued, it would require the City to pay that debt over 25 years rather than over 20 years and would cause additional costs of as much as \$11 million over the 25 years.

In conclusion, the Director of Finance called attention to the next steps that would include further review of the debt model, in consultation with the financial advisers, and in April 2022 with a potential recommendation of how to proceed.

Following brief comments and inquiries by Council Members, Mayor Lea thanked the City Manager and Director of Finance for the presentation, noting the budget briefing would be received and filed.

At 12:33 p.m., the Mayor declared the Council meeting in recess for a Closed meeting in the Council's Conference Room, Room 450, fourth floor, Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building; and thereafter to be reconvened at 2:00 p.m., in the Council Chamber.

At 2:00 p.m., the Council meeting reconvened in the Council Chamber, with Mayor Lea presiding.

PRESENT: Council Members Patricia White-Boyd, William D. Bestpitch, Joseph L. Cobb, Robert L. Jeffrey, Jr., Stephanie Moon Reynolds, Vivian Sanchez-Jones, and Mayor Sherman P. Lea, Sr.-7.

ABSENT: None-0.

Mayor Lea declared the existence of a quorum.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Robert S. Cowell, Jr., City Manager; Timothy R. Spencer, City Attorney; and Cecelia F. McCoy, City Clerk.

The Invocation was delivered by The Reverend Jeff Wilson, Pastor, Huntington Court United Methodist Church.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was led by the Mayor.

PRESENTATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

PROCLAMATION DECLARING MARCH 2022 AS DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES MONTH: Mayor Lea declared March 2022 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and presented the proclamation to Karen Michalski-Karney, Executive Director, Blue Ridge Independent Living Center.

(See ceremonial copy of proclamation on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION DISTINGUISHED BUDGET PRESENTATION AWARD: Amelia Merchant, Finance Director and staff was presented the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the City's annual budget for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2020.

HEARING OF CITIZENS UPON PUBLIC MATTERS: NONE.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Mayor advised that all matters listed under the Consent Agenda were considered to be routine by the Members of Council and would be enacted by one motion in the form, or forms, listed on the Consent Agenda, and if discussion were desired, the item would be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered separately.

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL: Minutes of the regular meeting of City Council held on Monday, February 7, 2022, was before the body.

(See Minutes on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member Moon Reynolds moved that the reading of the minutes be dispensed with and approved as recorded. The motion seconded by Council Member Jeffrey and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

MINUTES OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE: Minutes of the Audit Committee held on Monday, December 20, 2021, was before the Council.

(See Minutes on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member Moon Reynolds moved that the minutes be received and filed. The motion seconded by Council Member Jeffrey and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

RESIGNATION OF JANET CARTY-ROANOKE ARTS COMMISSION: A communication from the City Clerk advising of the resignation of Janet Carty as a member of the Roanoke Arts Commission, effective immediately.

Council Member Moon Reynolds moved that the resignation be accepted and the communication be received and filed. The motion seconded by Council Member Jeffrey and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

OATHS OF OFFICE-ROANOKE NEIGHBORHOOD ADVOCATES-TOWING ADVISORY BOARD: Reports of qualification of Rachel Hale as a member of the Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates to fill unexpired term of office ending September 30, 2022; and Manuel Dotson as a member (Citizen-at-Large) of the Towing Advisory Board for a three-year term of office ending October 31, 2023; were before the Council.

Council Members Moon Reynolds moved that the reports of qualification be received and filed. The motion seconded by Council Member Jeffrey and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones, and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

REGULAR AGENDA

PUBLIC HEARINGS: NONE.

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

ROANOKE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL UPDATE: John Hull, Executive Director, Roanoke Regional Partnership, appeared before the Council and provided an overview of activities of the organization for 2021, and highlighted the following items:

- 2021 Successes
- Economic Impact
- Business Attraction
- Innovation Region
- Site Development Support
- Supporting the Recovery
- Project Outside
- Thrive 2027

(See presentation on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Mr. Hull summarized the report stating that 2021 was a success with two new expansions for a total of 290 jobs and \$55 million in capital investment amongst Cardinal Glass, Munters, Balchem and A. Duie Pyle, which is in the City of Roanoke. He noted that the impact of regional partnerships in 2021 equals \$125 million, which represents two successful projects of full buildout and operation, impacts equate to 530 jobs within the region.

He concluded that in six months, the Roanoke Regional Partnership delivered as many inquiries as in a full year of 2019; and in 2021, the year ended with a 60 percent increase, adding projects and prospects indicated there was momentum and potential for significant impact in the year ahead.

Mr. Hull recognized Pete Eshelman and Katie Beach, who worked tirelessly to build a meaningful brand around the outdoors and key events drawing outside participation, such as the Blue Ridge Marathon, known as America's toughest road race and GO Fest, the area's signature outdoor event.

Following commendations and brief discussion by the Council Members, the Mayor thanked Mr. Hull for the informative report and advised that the Annual Update would be received and filed.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICERS AND COMMENTS OF CITY MANAGER:

BRIEFINGS:

Gun Violence Prevention Framework

Prior to recognizing departments involved in gun violence prevention, the City Manager advised that a briefing on gun violence prevention framework would reoccur at the first Council meeting of each month to keep the Council abreast of the work of the Gun Violence Prevention Commission and associated partners in addressing the City's issue of gun violence.

(See copy of Roanoke Youth and Gang Violence Community Assessment final report on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

The City Manager called upon the following staff members for comments:

Samuel Roman, Chief of Police, advised that from year to date, 14 individuals were struck by gunfire in the City of Roanoke, two incidents occurring over the past couple of weeks, one in the 700 block of Hunt Avenue, N. W., and the other in the 600 block of Liberty Road, N. W., adding that in terms of operational work over the past month, officers have recovered 24 firearms in evidentiary arena and year to date, recovered 56 firearms and served 190 felony warrants. He mentioned how Lloyd Merchant, RESET Coordinator and his team recently went on three deployments to neighborhoods impacted by gun violence or violent crime with the goal of connecting residents with services and support.

Angie O'Brien, Chief Strategy Officer, highlighted the activities of the Star City Safe Initiative which includes the Roanoke City Public Library, Parks and Recreation, Human Resources, RESET, Economic Development, Department of Sexual Service, and the Youth Violence Prevention Unit which collaborated in offering programs, such as recording studio efforts at the Fishburn Mansion, three on three basketball games, attendance at the Harlem Globetrotters basketball game, extended library hours and paid apprenticeships. She concluded that the program was a grassroots effort offered by Jeffrey Powell, General Services Director, along with City staff ranging from directors to frontline employees vested in aiding the City in response to violence reduction while creating atmosphere, activities and events to expose the youth to new things.

Following brief comments by the Council Members, Council Member Cobb updated the Council on the efforts of the Gun Violence Prevention Commission. He pointed out that the Commission was currently working on two grant opportunities, \$100,000.00 in mini grants this year and \$100,000.00 over the next three years, concluding the mini grant process was open through the end of March 2022.

He reported that the Commission would also award violence interruption grants with baseline of \$25,000.00, over the next two years, with a total grant amount of \$400,000.00 that would focus on youth afterschool programs, mentorship, education, life skills, training programs, workforce training, conflict resolution, trauma-informed care and mental health counseling for family's impacted by violence.

As part of current activities already implemented, Council Member Cobb noted that the reading program at Lincoln Terrace Elementary School was going very well, with close to 30 regular volunteers and approximately 40 to 50 children participating, proving to be a model that could be duplicated in other schools. Lastly, he commented that the first cohort of conflict mediator training would begin soon so that when there is a perceived situation of violence or conflict, it can be resolved in a positive and healthy way.

Following closing remarks, he acknowledged Chris Roberts and Antonio Stovall for their expertise to the community and for their service to the Roanoke communities.

There being no additional questions or comments by the Council Members, Mayor Lea thanked all the presenters for the informative report and advised that the remarks would be received and filed.

Year of the Artist

Doug Jackson, Arts and Culture Coordinator, briefed the Council on current art programs and activities of the Roanoke Arts Commission, noting that in December, the We are Art project may have only incurred costs of \$1,500.00, but was a tremendous success. He highlighted the latest project, Year of the Artist, which strived to advance community goals, integrate artists in civic problem solving, explore, experiment, and importantly pay the artists. In closing, he mentioned additional information would be forthcoming.

(See copy of presentation on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

There being no questions or comments by the Council Members, Mayor Lea thanked Mr. Jackson for the informative presentation and advised that the briefing would be received and filed.

Presentation of the City of Roanoke's 2021 Citizen Survey

The City Manager provided background information about the City's 2021 Citizen Survey. He reported that the survey was conducted every few years through many different means of communication and engagement with the citizens; adding the downside was conducting a survey amid upheaval from the political, social unrest including the national spike in violence have affected the public's anxiety and perception of the services of government.

Loretta Alsop, Issues and Answers, Inc., appeared before the Council, virtually to present results of the survey, noting that 425 surveys were completed; the same questionnaire used for both the online and telephone data collection, with the average length of a telephone interview being 20 minutes; and the average length of an online survey being 14 minutes.

Ms. Alsop reported two-thirds of residents rated the quality of life in the City as excellent/good; eight out of ten were satisfied with the overall quality of City services; eight out of ten felt safe in their own neighborhoods; and three-quarters remained satisfied with police services, but there is great concern regarding public safety driven by the recent increases in gun violence.

In reviewing the insights and implications of the survey results, she mentioned the City excelled at nearly half of all municipal services offered and that salient fact could be shared with residents via digital and local media. She pointed out other findings worth sharing with the community included high agreement levels with improved water quality of the Roanoke River and its tributary system is important to the community; and citizens would recommend living in Roanoke to someone who asks them.

She continued the presentation stating that police services consistently remained among the top-rated municipal service aspects; however, the recent drop in satisfaction should not be ignored, especially in combination with dropping perception of safety in local neighborhoods and downtown. She further stated that efforts of the City to improve the quality of housing—while not on the priority list due to lower importance, has been the least satisfactory item in the survey since 2000, and depending on the City's resources, this may be an area considered for additional investment.

Lastly, Ms. Alsop reported on the lowest level of agreement items of the survey, which included downtown off-street and on-street parking, is available; and City government does a good job focusing on the unique needs of youths. Both items rated as the bottom issues across survey years indicating unresolved pain points.

Following a brief discussion about the survey results, Mayor Lea thanked Ms. Alsop for an informative presentation and advised that the briefing would be received.

CITY MANAGER:

BRIEFINGS: NONE.

ITEMS RECOMMENDED FOR ACTION:

2022 CARILION CLINIC GRANT: The City Manager submitted a written communication recommending acceptance of the 2022 Carilion Clinic Grant to provide funding for the Financial Empowerment Center, an initiative to help improve the financial stability of low and moderate – income households around the country.

(For full text, see communication on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Council Member Bestpitch offered the following resolution:

(#42305-030722) A RESOLUTION authorizing the acceptance of the 2022 Grant for the Financial Empowerment Center from Carilion Clinic; and authorizing execution of any required documentation on behalf of the City, including a Letter of Agreement with Carilion Clinic.

(For full text of resolution, see Resolution Book No. 82, page 321.)

Council Member Bestpitch moved the adoption of Resolution No. 42305-030722. The motion seconded by Council Member Moon Reynolds and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

Council Member Cobb offered the following budget ordinance:

(#42306-030722) AN ORDINANCE to appropriate funding from the Carilion Clinic to supplement funding for the Financial Empowerment Center for financial counseling of low-and moderate-income individuals, amending and reordaining certain sections of the 2021 - 2022 Grant Fund Appropriations, and dispensing with the second reading by title of this ordinance.

(For full text of ordinance, see Ordinance Book No. 82, page 321.)

Council Member Bestpitch moved the adoption of Budget Ordinance No. 42306-030722. The motion seconded by Council Member Jeffrey and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT EVICTION PREVENTION BOOST PILOT GRANT: The City Manager submitted a written communication recommending acceptance of the Cities for Financial Empowerment Eviction Prevention Boost Pilot Grant to be used by the Financial Empowerment Center to pilot a targeted financial counseling integration with municipally led rental assistance/eviction prevention efforts.

(For full text, see communication on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

Vice-Mayor White-Boyd offered the following resolution:

(#42307-030722) A RESOLUTION authorizing the acceptance of the Eviction Prevention Boost Pilot Grant ("Grant") from Cities for Financial Empowerment; and authorizing execution of any required documentation on behalf of the City.

(For full text of resolution, see Resolution Book No. 82, page 322.)

Vice-Mayor White-Boyd moved the adoption of Resolution No. 42307-030722. The motion seconded by Council Member Moon Reynolds and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

Council Member Moon Reynolds offered the following budget ordinance:

(#42308-030722) AN ORDINANCE to appropriate funding from the Financial Empowerment Fund Amendment for eviction prevention of low-and moderate-income individuals, amending and reordaining certain sections of the 2021 - 2022 General Fund and Grant Fund Appropriations, and dispensing with the second reading by title of this ordinance.

(For full text of ordinance, see Ordinance Book No. 82, page 323.)

Council Member Moon Reynolds moved the adoption of Budget Ordinance No. 42308-030722. The motion seconded by Council Member Cobb and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

COMMENTS OF CITY MANAGER. NONE.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES:

EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT ADVISORY BOARD: Vice-Mayor White-Boyd, Chair, Equity and Empowerment Advisory Board, shared information regarding the first Annual Action Plan, reporting the Board attempted to address some of the issues discussed during public hearings, and highlighted some of the functions of the board being to review priorities, to develop proposed plans for implementation of policies and actions, to review existing policies, ordinances and regulations, and to make recommendations to City Council.

(See copy of presentation on file in the City Clerk's Office.)

She concluded that the Board lacked volunteers and urged interested persons desiring meaningful change in the city to contact the City Clerk's Office to complete an application, adding Board meetings were on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m., and a public hearing held every quarter.

There being no questions or comments by the Council Members, Mayor Lea thanked the Vice-Mayor for the information and advised that the presentation would be received and filed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: NONE.

INTRODUCTION AND CONSIDERATION OR ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

SOVEREIGN NATION OF UKRAINE: Council Member Cobb offered the following resolution supporting the people of the sovereign nation of Ukraine:

(#42309-030722) A RESOLUTION supporting the people of the sovereign nation of Ukraine and condemning Russia's violent, unwarranted, and inhumane invasion of Ukraine.

(For full text of resolution, see Resolution Book No. 82, page 324.)

Council Member Cobb moved the adoption of Resolution No. 42309-030722. The motion seconded by Council Member Moon Reynolds.

Council Member Bestpitch expressed his sincerest appreciation to the Mayor for the courageous letter sent to Governor Youngkin. He amended the motion to include the following clauses as part of the proposed resolution, "Whereas Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, Inc., established a partnership with Pscov, Russia almost 30 years ago, leading to cultural and educational exchanges that have prompted mutual understanding and friendship; and Whereas, the Sister Cities relationships resulted from President Dwight D. Eisenhower's call for establishment of such connections during his 1956 White House Summit on Citizen Diplomacy", noting President Eisenhower specifically cited the importance of such relationships between people in the United States and people in Russia as the only road to genuine understanding and peace between our two countries. And the addition of a third sentence under Therefore be it resolved, which states "Council continues to support the partnerships between Roanoke Valley Sister Cities, Inc., and the seven Sister Cities on four continents, in furtherance of their mission to promote mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation." The amended motion was seconded by Council Member Moon Reynolds.

Following extensive discussion regarding the amendment to the proposed resolution, Council Member Bestpitch further commented that it was important to omit any suggestion that Roanoke Valley Sister Cities break the ties with people in Pscov, Russia, but support the connection between Roanoke Valley Sister Cities and Pscov, Russia, and ultimately to promote peace and understanding between the United States and people in other countries.

There being no further comments by the Council, Resolution No. 42309-030722, as amended, was adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

MOTION AND MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

INQUIRIES AND/OR COMMENTS BY THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL:

FREEDOM FIRST ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE AND SHAMROCK FESTIVAL:
Mayor Lea announced the Annual Freedom First St. Patrick's Day Parade and Shamrock Festival would be held on Saturday, March 12 in downtown Roanoke and invited the community to attend.

VACANCIES ON CERTAIN AUTHORITIES, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES APPOINTED BY COUNCIL:

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED MEETING: With respect to the Closed Meeting just concluded, Council Member Jeffrey moved that each Member of City Council certify to the best of his or her knowledge that: (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in any motion by which any Closed Meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered by City Council. The motion seconded by Vice-Mayor White-Boyd and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS: The Mayor called attention to a vacancy created by the resignation of Valeria Alphin as a member of the Board of Zoning Appeals for a term of office of ending December 31, 2023; whereupon, he opened the floor for nominations.

Council Member Bestpitch placed in nomination the name of Andrew Raduly.

There being no further nominations, Mr. Raduly was appointed to fill the unexpired term of office of Valeria Alphin as a member of the Board of Zoning Appeals ending December 31, 2023, by the following vote:

FOR MR. RADULY: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT ADVISORY BOARD: The Mayor called attention to a vacancy created by the resignation of Dr. Elda Stanco Downey as a member of the Equity and Empowerment Advisory Board for a term of office of ending December 31, 2023; whereupon, he opened the floor for nominations.

Council Member Bestpitch placed in nomination the name of Dr. Brenda Russ.

There being no further nominations, Dr. Russ was appointed to fill the unexpired term of office of Dr. Elda Stanco Downey as a member of the Equity and Empowerment Advisory Board ending December 31, 2023, by the following vote:

FOR DR. RUSS: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMISSION: The Mayor called attention to the upcoming expiration of the three-year terms of office of Stacey Sheppard, Taisha Steele and Council Member Joseph Cobb ending March 31, 2022; whereupon he opened the floor for nominations.

Council Member Bestpitch placed in nomination the names of Stacey Sheppard, Angela Williams, and Council Member Joseph Cobb.

There being no further nominations, as members of the Gun Violence Prevention Commission, Ms. Sheppard was reappointed and Ms. Williams was appointed to replace Taisha Steele for three-year terms of office, each, commencing April 1, 2022 and ending March 31, 2025; and because his term as a Council Member ends December 31, 2022, Council Member Cobb was reappointed for a term of office ending December 31, 2022, by the following vote:

FOR MS. SHEPPARD, MS. WILLIAMS, AND COUNCIL MEMBER COBB: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

Inasmuch as Ms. Sheppard is not a City resident, Council Member Bestpitch moved that the City residency requirement be waived in this instance. The motion was seconded by Council Member Jeffrey and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

ROANOKE ARTS COMMISSION: The Mayor called attention to a vacancy created by the resignation of Janet Carty as a member of the Roanoke Arts Commission for a term of office of ending June 30, 2024; whereupon he opened the floor for nominations.

Council Member Bestpitch placed in nomination the name of Laura Carden.

There being no further nominations, Ms. Carden was appointed to fill the unexpired term of office of Janet Carty as a member of the Roanoke Arts Commission ending June 30, 2024, by the following vote:

FOR MS. CARDEN: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

ROANOKE REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY: Inasmuch as Karen Michalski-Karney who was appointed at the February 7 Council Meeting to fill the unexpired term of office of R. Gail Burruss (deceased) as a Commissioner of the Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority Board, is not a City-resident, Council Member Bestpitch moved that the City residency be waived in this instance. The motion was seconded by Council Member Jeffrey and adopted by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

NAYS: None-0.

VISIT VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE, BOARD OF DIRECTORS: The Mayor called attention to a vacancy created by the resignation of Dr. Elda Stanco Downey as a City representative of the Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge, Board of Directors for a term of office of ending June 30, 2022; whereupon he opened the floor for nominations.

Council Member Bestpitch placed in nomination the name of Dawn Tanner Erdman.

There being no further nominations, Ms. Tanner Erdman was appointed to fill the unexpired term of office of Dr. Elda Stanco Downey as a City representative of the Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge, Board of Directors ending June 30, 2022; and for an additional one-year term of office ending June 30, 2023, by the following vote:

FOR MS. TANNER ERDMAN: Council Members White-Boyd, Bestpitch, Cobb, Jeffrey, Moon Reynolds, Sanchez-Jones and Mayor Lea-7.

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Lea declared the Council meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

A P P R O V E D

ATTEST:

Cecelia F. McCoy, CMC
City Clerk

Sherman P. Lea, Sr.
Mayor
